

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method for determining the availability of an item requested by an on-line shopper,

comprising the steps of:

determining an approximate quantity of an item available for purchase by an on-line

shopper; and

adjusting the approximate quantity responsive to a quantity-held estimate of a number of
units of the item held by in-person shoppers prior to checkout by the in-person shoppers.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the quantity-held estimate is dependent upon an average
number of the item purchased historically during a specified period of time.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the quantity-held estimate is dependent upon a time of day.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the quantity-held estimate is dependent upon a day of a week.

1 5. The method of claim1, wherein the quantity-held estimate is dependent upon proximity to a
2 holiday.

1 6. A method for determining the availability of an item requested by an on-line shopper,
2 comprising the steps of:

3 identifying an item requested by an on-line shopper;

4 determining an approximate quantity of the item available for purchase by the on-line
shopper by reading an inventory record;

5 adjusting the approximate quantity responsive to a quantity-held estimate of a number of
6 units of the item held by in-person shoppers prior to check out by the in-person shoppers, to
7 provide an adjusted quantity;

8 comparing the adjusted quantity with a first threshold; and
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10 when the adjusted quantity is less than the first threshold, invoking a corrective action.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the step of invoking includes the step of prompting the on-
2 line shopper to select an alternative item.

1 8. The method of claim 6, wherein the step of invoking includes the steps of asking the on-line
2 shopper to submit an order for the item; and, if the on-line shopper submits the order, removing
3 the item from stock and revising the approximate quantity.

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9. The method of claim 6, wherein the step of invoking includes the steps of monitoring the
approximate quantity when the adjusted quantity is less than the first threshold, and informing
the on-line shopper when the approximate quantity falls below a second threshold.

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10. The method of claim 6, wherein the step of invoking includes the step of instructing an in-
2 house shopping assistant to reserve the item for the on-line shopper.